

Message Text

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S E C R E T DAMASCUS 3711

NODIS

CHEROKEE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, SY, US, PLO

SUBJECT: UNSC RES 242 AND THE PALESTINIANS

REF: STATE 136937

1. KHADDAM RECEIVED ME JUNE 14 IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING HIS OFFICIAL TALKS WITH VISITING DANISH FOREIGN MINISTER. IN REPLY TO MY PRESENTATION, KHADDAM STATED HIS RECOLLECTION THAT WHEN THE SUBJECT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED IN GENEVA IT HAD BEEN ON THE BASIS OF MODIFYING RES 242 SO AS TO "LEAD TO" AND PERMIT DISCUSSION OF THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. HE SAID HE CLEARLY REMEMBERED PRES ASSAD REPLYING TO PRES CARTER'S INQUIRY THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO SUBSTITUTE THE EXPRESSION "NATIONAL RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE" FOR "REFUGEES."

2. RESPONDING TO MY QUESTION WHAT HE THOUGHT MIGHT BE ACHIEVED BY EXPANDING DISCUSSION OF THIS IDEA TO OTHER PALESTINIAN LEADERS, KHADDAM SAID THAT ARAFAT COULD NOT TAKE A FINAL DECISION ALONE ON THIS MATTER BECAUSE THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP WAS COLLEGIAL. THUS, HE ASKED, OF WHAT BENEFIT WOULD ARAFAT'S AGREEMENT BE IF HE DID

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NOT HAVE THE APPROVAL OF THE LEADERSHIP?

3. I ASKED WHAT ARAFAT'S REACTION HAD BEEN TO THE IDEA WHEN IT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED WITH HIM. KHADDAM REPLIED THAT THE SYRIANS HAD GOTTEN NO SPECIFIC REACTION FROM ARAFAT BECAUSE THEY HAD NOT DISCUSSED THE QUESTION FULLY WITH HIM. THEY HAD ONLY MADE AN INITIAL SOUNDING

(PULSE FEELING, IN ARABIC). ARAFAT HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN SPECIFICS OF THE CARTER-ASSAD DISCUSSION BUT HAD ONLY BEEN BRIEFED ON THE POSSIBILITY OF DISCUSSING A CHANGE IN RES 242 "SO AS TO ALLOW THE PALESTINIANS TO MOVE IN A BETTER MANNER WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF UN RESOLUTIONS." THIS, KHADDAM ASSERTED, WOULD HELP IN THE GENERAL MOVEMENT TOWARDS PEACE. HE THEN RECALLED THAT THE PLO AS WELL AS THE PALESTINE CENTRAL COUNCIL AND THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL HAD ALL DECIDED NOT TO ACCEPT RES 242 IN ITS PRESENT STATE. THIS DECISION REFLECTED THE CURRENT PALESTINIAN ATTITUDE.

4. I SAID TO KHADDAM IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT WE NOT ALLOW ANY MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN SYRIA AND THE U.S. TO DEVELOP ON THIS POINT. SAID I HAD REREAD AMBASSADOR MURPHY'S NOTES ON THE DISCUSSIONS IN GENEVA AND COULD CONFIRM TO HIM THAT THERE HAD BEEN NOTHING IN ANY U.S. STATEMENT INDICATING ANY INTENTION TO SEEK MODIFICATION OF RES 242. KHADDAM REPLIED COOLLY THAT OUR RECORDS DIFFERED ON THIS POINT. WHY, HE ASKED, WOULD THE PALESTINIANS ACCEPT 242 WITHOUT MODIFICATION? WHAT COULD THIS ACHIEVE FOR THEM? IN ANY CASE HE CONCLUDED, STANDING TO END THE MEETING, SYRIA HOPES IT WILL BE KEPT INFORMED OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS ON THE US SIDE. I ASSURED HIM THAT WE INTENDED TO KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH.

5. A HALF HOUR LATER, KHADDAM CALLED ME BACK TO REVISE HIS RESPONSE REGARDING PRESIDENT ASSAD'S MEETING WITH ARAFAT WHICH HE HAD NOT ATTENDED. HE SAID
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HE HAD READ THE REPORT OF THE MEETING AND WISHED TO CORRECT HIS ANSWER. ASSAD HAD INFORMED ARAFAT THAT A DISCUSSION HAD TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN HIM AND PRESIDENT CARTER ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING THE SUB-PARAGRAPH OF RESOLUTION 242 TO REPLACE THE WORD "REFUGEE" WITH THE EXPRESSION "RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE". ASSAD, KHADDAM SAID, HAD TALKED WITH ARAFAT PERSONALLY IN RESPONSE TO THE AGREEMENT HE HAD REACHED WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AND ON THE BASIS THAT THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY FROM THE U.S. SIDE OF MODIFYING RESOLUTION 242 IN THIS RESPECT. THE DISCUSSION HAD BEEN LIMITED TO ARAFAT ALONE, WHOSE REACTION HAD BEEN GOOD AND WHO HAD BEEN CAUTIONED NOT TO INFORM OTHERS OF THE PROPOSAL.
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